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SECURITY COUNCIL
Fifty-third year

Letter dated 16 September 1998 from the Permanent Representative of Cyprus to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Upon instructions from my Government, I have the honour to bring to your attention the following developments regarding the continuous and systematic plundering of the religious and cultural identity of the occupied part of Cyprus.

Once again I would like to point out that while the Government of Cyprus zealously protects all places of worship belonging to all faiths in Cyprus, Turkey has been resolute in its policy of religious intolerance in the occupied areas and refuses to adhere to international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions. The following recent documented violations are a reflection of the massive, ongoing campaign on the part of Turkey to alter the demographic character of occupied Cyprus.

More specifically,

1. The Church of Saint Theodoros in Lapithos, after being abandoned and desecrated, was vandalized (see photographs 1a-3a).*

2. The Shrine of Saint Kourmoutas in Lapithos has been profaned and defiled (see photograph 1b).*

The documented large-scale destruction of over 500 churches, which continues unabated, is an effort to turkify the occupied areas in violation of

* These photographs may be consulted at the Permanent Mission of Cyprus to the United Nations.

the 1954 Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict and the Declaration of the Principles of International Cultural Cooperation, adopted by the General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization in 1966.

Furthermore, this continuous and systematic plundering of the religious and cultural heritage of Cyprus, which forms part of the rich patrimony of the world, constitutes an affront to the civilized world.

In addition to the other gross violations against religious, cultural and historical monuments reported to you in previous correspondence, Turkey, as the occupying power for more than twenty-four years, is entirely accountable and fully answerable for these new illegal and wanton acts of vandalism.

This latest development is but another cogent example of Turkey's ultimate design and resolute determination to alter the character of the occupied part of Cyprus and thus obliterate a civilization that has endured for more than 8,000 years.

I would be grateful if you would have the present letter circulated as a document of the fifty-third session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 62, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Sotos ZACKHEOS
Ambassador
Permanent Representative